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Your consumer education connection

# Food Safety Educator

Volume 6, No. 4, 2001

## ■ Launched! *A New Education Campaign for Pregnant Women*

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) is teaming up with public and private partners to provide safe food handling information to pregnant women through health care providers, including physicians, nurses, and midwives.

According to Susan Conley, director of food safety education for FSIS, pregnant women and their unborn children face special risks from a foodborne pathogen called *Listeria monocytogenes*.

While *Listeria monocytogenes* is rare, this foodborne pathogen can cause serious illness, including miscarriage. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 2,500 people become seriously ill each year from the disease, and 1 in 5 people die.

Pregnant women are 20 times more likely than other healthy adults to become infected with listeriosis. In fact, about one-third of listeriosis cases happen during pregnancy.

"But our consumer research showed us that pregnant women were not aware of these risks—and they wanted to learn more. They told us they wanted educational materials that provided clear and concise information about risks and safeguards. And they told us they wanted to

receive this information from their medical caregiver. This research is the foundation of this campaign," Conley said.

(See *The Food Safety Educator*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2001, pg. 9, "Pregnant Women Want to Hear From Physicians About Listeriosis.")

The centerpiece of the campaign is a new patient education publication, *Listeriosis and Pregnancy: What is Your Risk?* The double-sided fact sheet comes in tear-off pads, with 25 sheets each. "The medical community told us tear-off pads were the most convenient format for them," Conley explained.

More than 700,000 tear-off pads will be distributed to pregnant women and the medical community through the campaign. (A sample tear-sheet is included as an insert to this newsletter.)

FSIS developed the campaign with the International Food Information Council Foundation. Other partners include: the Food and Drug Administration; the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses.

In the coming year, according to Conley, "we'll be continuing to reach out to a wide variety of health practitioners with this educational cam-

paign. We want them to understand the risks and to make it easy for them to provide patient information."

The patient education pads can be requested by e-mailing: [fsis.outreach@usda.gov](mailto:fsis.outreach@usda.gov)

FSIS has a Web page with links to many documents concerning *Listeria monocytogenes*. The site includes links to:

- the new publication,
- consumer research,
- relevant *Federal Register* notices, and
- other government Web sites.

Go to: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/OA/topics/lm.htm>

Additional information for health practitioners can be found in a publication produced collaboratively by the federal government and the American Medical Association. It is called *Diagnosis and Management of Foodborne Illness: A Primer for Physicians*. It can be accessed through: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/3629.html> •

**New USDA  
Under Secretary  
for Food Safety**

(see page 2)

# ■ New USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety



Department of Animal Science Research Advisory Committee and the Food Safety Response Team of the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.

In her statement to Congress, Dr. Murano noted that she is a native of Havana, Cuba. Her family settled first in Puerto Rico and then Miami.

Dr. Murano graduated with a B.S. in Biology from Florida International University.

"I developed a deep interest in the medical field and in public health, which guided me to earn an M.S. degree in Anaerobic Microbiology and a Ph.D. in Food Science from Virginia Tech.

Dr. Elsa A. Murano was sworn in as under secretary for food safety by Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman on October 2, 2001.

In this position, Murano oversees the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

A supporter of food safety education—including the Fight BAC!™ campaign—Dr. Murano has extensive public and private experience in the field of food safety as both a manager and educator.

During the past 6 years, Dr. Murano held several positions with Texas A&M University at College Station, Texas.

Most recently she served as the director of the university's Center for Food Safety. During this time she also served on the university's

As a researcher and teacher in the field of food safety, Dr. Murano noted that her research led her "to investigate organisms like *Escherichia coli* O157:H7, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and *Salmonella*, all the bad actors that have become household words. My approach in this work has been to determine where these pathogens are found, and to investigate safe methods that can be used to control or eliminate them from farm to table."

Noting the importance of sound science in making decisions, Dr. Murano added that "I have also observed the need for a proactive approach, one that does not react to food safety crises but rather anticipates risks.

"The events of September 11th are a reminder to all of us that we need to be diligent in order to prevent threats to our food supply as much as humanly possible"

Concluding, Dr. Murano said, "We're all in this together, government (and I mean not only those in USDA, but all other agencies that play a role in food safety), consumers, industry, educators, and scientists. It is only through a team approach, working in total transparency, and standing on the truth of science that we will accomplish our goal for America of having the safest food supply possible." •

*"I have ... observed  
the need for a  
proactive approach,  
one that does not  
react to food safety  
crises but rather  
anticipates risks."*

"I also developed an appreciation for the field of food microbiology, and decided to dedicate my life to the study of bacteria, which, although microscopic, are capable of causing so many cases of foodborne illness each year in our country and throughout the world."

*"We will accomplish our goal  
for America of having the  
safest food supply possible."*

—Dr. Elsa A. Murano



# ■ The Three “R’s”

## *Responsive, Rigorous, Respect*

Addressing the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) in November 2001, Dr. Elsa Murano identified the three operating principles of her administration. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), she said, “will be responsive, it will be rigorous, and it will strive to earn the respect of our stakeholders.”

### **Responsive**

In being responsive, Dr. Murano sees the agency as open and listening to stakeholders, continuing to hold public meetings, and seeking the public’s input.

The other way the agency will be responsive, she said, is by addressing emerging food safety hazards quickly, pointing out that the agency is now better able to identify emerging hazards through better surveillance systems as well as improved inspection systems.

### **Rigorous**

Science is the only foundation for effective food safety policy, according to Dr. Murano. “I am open to new solutions, new ways of doing business, but only if they stand on the firm foundation of science.” Dr. Murano sees four keys to science-based decision making:

- risk assessments—These are the tools that allow policy makers to identify hazards and provide a basis for making risk management decisions. “The analyses we make must be complete, and the models that are generated must stand the rigor of the peer-review process,” she said.

- expert advisory committees—The agency will continue to seek expert advice through two advisory committees, the National Advisory Committee on Meat and Poultry Inspection and the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods.

- FSIS laboratories—“Our laboratories contribute greatly to our science-based approach,” Dr. Murano said. “They must be second to none in terms of their ability to meet emerging challenges.” All three FSIS laboratories are expected to be certified by the International Organization for Standardization by the end of 2001.

- open to novel technologies—“We must also encourage the application of novel technologies to food safety,” Dr. Murano said, noting that irradiation has proven very effective against conventional foodborne illness. It needs to be considered, along with other innovative methods of decontamination.

### **Respect**

“We must work to deserve this label,” Dr. Murano said, “by ensuring that we make our decisions through an open, transparent process that includes all stakeholders.

“I challenge you to grade us on these 3 “R’s” as we work together.”

To read the complete speech, go to: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/speeches/speeches.htm> •

## **Keeping America’s Food and Agriculture Safe**

Safeguarding American agriculture—and food—is one of the nation’s highest priorities. Everyone, from the highest levels of government to food growers, producers, and foodservice, is paying new attention to security issues.

In her November speech to FMI, Dr. Murano addressed bioterrorism. “A strong food safety infrastructure,” she said, “with systems in place to prevent contamination, can address hazards, regardless of how they are introduced.” FSIS, she added, “has a long history of dealing with food emergencies, and this experience will serve the agency well.”

To access the latest federal information regarding “biosecurity,” go to: <http://www.usda.gov/special/biosecurity/safeguard.htm> •

# New Progress, New Tools, New Campaign

The Food Safety and Inspection Service's (FSIS) campaign to promote thermometer use—Thermy™—is finishing its second year with a great progress report and new directions for the coming year.

The campaign was launched in the spring of 2000 to encourage consumers to use food thermometers. While many people own food thermometers, most only take them out of the drawer for holiday meals.

According to Holly McPeak, Thermy™ coordinator, the campaign was designed to change that picture and encourage cooks to use food thermometers for everyday meals. Why? Because using a food thermometer is the only way to make sure food has been cooked to a high enough temperature to destroy harmful bacteria.

Over the past 2 years, McPeak reports, "We've seen tremendous interest and participation in the campaign from a wide variety of educators, including extension agents, public health, industry, school nurses, and teachers. They have taken the Thermy™ character and information everywhere imaginable, from fairs and schools to grocery stores and malls.

"Thermometer manufacturers are including our educational information in their thermometer package. Grocery stores are using our materials for their in-store displays. Thermy™ appeared in school skits and shows—the momentum has been amazing," McPeak reported.

## New tools for foodservice:

Thermy™ materials are being modified for use by foodservice, reflecting the temperatures contained in the Food and Drug Administration's Food Code (see article on page 5).

## New tools for consumers:

A number of new Thermy™ materials have been made available over the past year, including:

- Thermy™ graphics
- Spanish Thermy™ materials
- Thermy™ coloring page
- Thermy™ puzzle page for kids

Go to the Thermy™ Web site:  
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/thermy/index.htm>

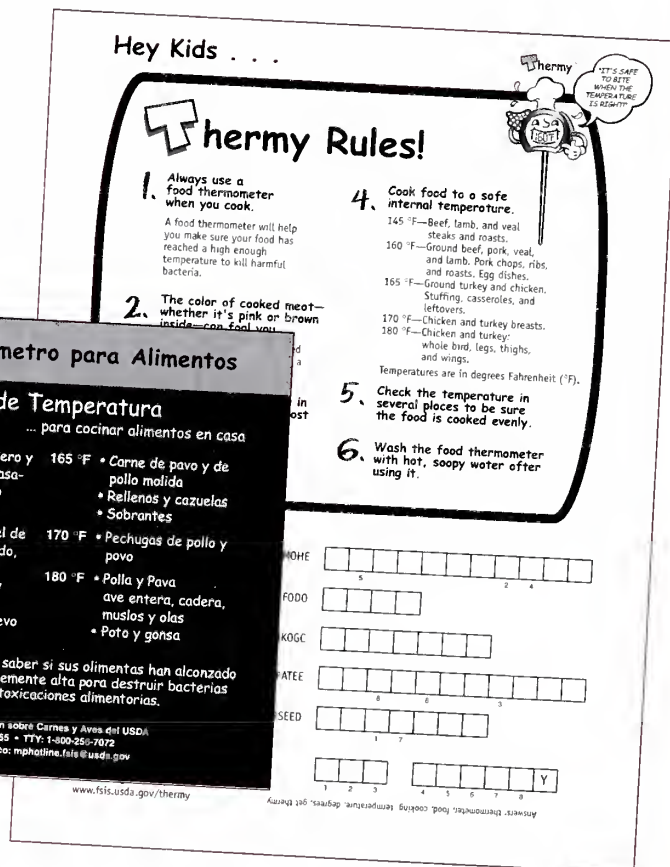
## New campaign:

Looking to the future, the FSIS food safety education staff is moving the campaign into a new phase using social marketing principles.

Susan Conley, director of food safety education for FSIS, explains, "As the next step in our campaign, we want to further target our information to people most likely to change behavior.

"To refine our understanding of this audience—and barriers to behavior change—we are working with a social marketing firm, utilizing a demographic database, and continuing focus group research."

The next issue of *The Educator* will report on this research as well as the next generation of Thermy™ campaign materials. •





# ■ The Front Burner: Food Safety for Foodservice

As the calendar rolls into 2002, foodservice providers will find more educational tools available to them for free through a special alliance of government and industry.

The Food Safety Training and Education Alliance (FSTEa) is working to improve access to food safety education and training for foodservice.

Its Web site (<http://www.fstea.org>) provides a rich variety of resources:

- **training materials:** more than 40 online training manuals as well as signs, foreign language materials, graphics, and clip art;
- **"learn from others":** success stories, interviews with experts, and an online discussion group;



- **rules and regulations:** Food and Drug Administration's Food Code, state and local food codes, and more;
- **directories:** government agencies, universities, state and local officials, state restaurant and hospitality associations;

- **getting trained:** information on state-approved food safety training and certifications, as well as standards and guidelines for training and certification; and
- **food safety funding:** grants available from a variety of federal agencies.

In addition to USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, FSTEa member organizations are diverse and include: the Food and Drug Administration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Association of Food and Drug Officials, the Conference for Food Protection, the Educational Foundation of the National Restaurant Association, and the American Culinary Federation. •

## ■ Thermy™: Working for Foodservice

Thermym™, the educational messenger for the FSIS campaign to increase thermometer use, is rolling up his sleeves and dipping into pot roasts and stews to help foodservice employees get the temperature right and "make it safe to bite!"

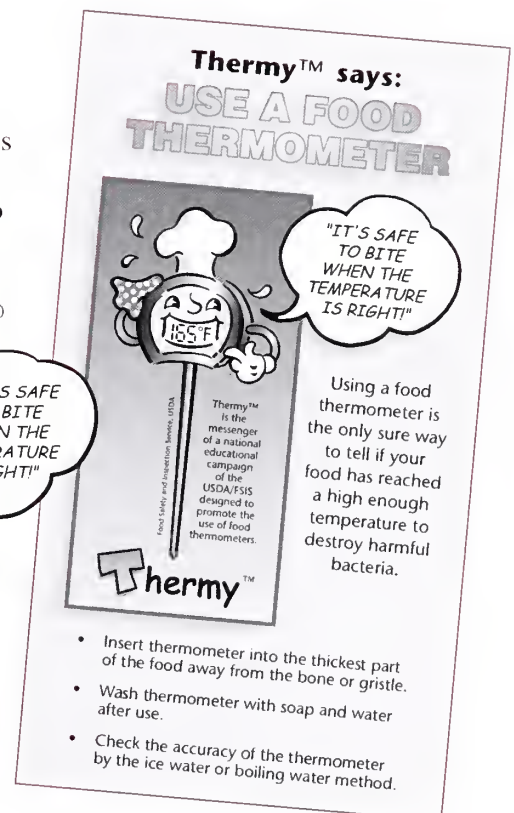
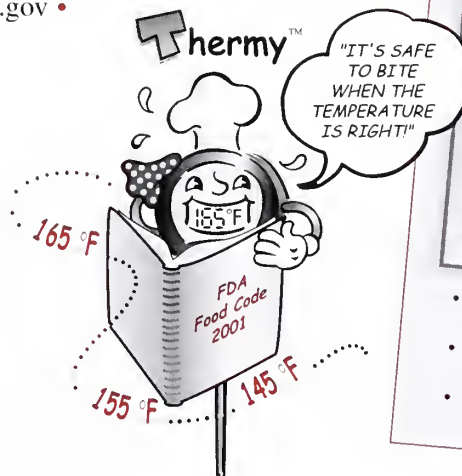
New for 2002, FSIS is releasing educational materials—including posters and magnets—featuring Thermym™ AND temperatures required by the Food and Drug Administration's newly revised Food Code for foodservice.

According to Thermym™ coordinator Holly McPeak, "Up to this point, Thermym™ materials have been geared to the consumer and featured safe cooking temperatures for cooks at home. These new materials feature foodservice cooking temperatures—it's never been easier—or more

important—to use food thermometers."

To help get the Thermym™ for foodservice message out, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service will be introducing Thermym™ information to 97,000 school foodservice managers throughout the country.

E-mail requests to [fsis.outreach@usda.gov](mailto:fsis.outreach@usda.gov) •



## ■ Food Safety Info in Spanish

The Food Safety and Inspection Service has a growing number of materials in Spanish.

- *Basics for Handling Food Safely*—The Spanish version of this fact sheet is available on the Web. Go to: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/facts\\_basicos.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/facts_basicos.htm)

You can find additional food safety information in languages other than English by going to:

<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/languages.htm>

And don't forget two other great sources:

- the federal food safety Web site: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/~fsg/fsglang.html>
- the USDA/FDA Foodborne Illness Education Information Center: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodborne> •

## ■ New Harvard Study Finds Low BSE Risk

A new risk analysis conducted for the U.S. Department of Agriculture by the Harvard Center for Risk Analysis concludes that "the U.S. is highly resistant to any introduction of BSE or similar disease. BSE is extremely unlikely to become established in the U.S."

The Harvard Center developed a simulation model to help characterize the consequences of introducing BSE into the U.S. by various means. The model allowed them to predict the number of newly infected animals that would result from the introduction of BSE, the time course of the disease following its introduction, and the potential for human exposure.

To read more, go to:  
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/oa/bse> •

## ■ New Director for FSIS Office of Public Health

D. W. Chen, M.D., M.P.H. has been named the new director of the Human Health Sciences Division, Office of Public Health and Science, Food Safety and Inspection Service.

Taking over the position in August 2001, Dr. Chen previously served as Director of the Division of Transplantation for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). That office regulates the nation's organ and tissue transplant system.

Dr. Chen has also worked in medical education and public health workforce development with HHS.

Dr. Chen is an active duty Commissioned Officer with the U.S. Public Health Service. He is Board-Certified in Preventive Medicine and a Fellow of the American College of Preventive Medicine. He completed his undergraduate studies at Harvard University, earned a Masters in Public Health degree from the Harvard School of Public Health, and his medical degree from the Tufts University School of Medicine. •

## ■ Free! For Science Teachers!

With about \$30 worth of supplies found in grocery and hardware stores, teachers and students are ready to launch into a new world of learning with a free new educational program called *Science and the Food Supply*.

The program includes an Emmy-award-winning video, teachers guides for both middle and high school, and career development information. It's designed to turn kids on to science, food safety, and careers in science.

One teacher who worked with the program said, "The kids are so excited....The program has made a definite impact on the kids, in the school, and in their homes."

Produced jointly by the Food and Drug Administration and the National Science Teachers Association, science teachers can order this package by going to: <http://www.nsta.org/professionalinfo>

Or, you can write:  
NSTA  
Science and Our Food Supply  
1840 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22201-3000 •

## ■ Graphics Galore

Are you looking for graphics to use with food safety education projects? We've got 'em.

Check out the updated graphics from the Food Safety and Inspection Service. Go to:  
[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/image\\_library/index.htm](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/pubs/image_library/index.htm)

This page provides access to graphics from Fight BAC!™, Thermy™, *Cooking for Groups*, National Food Safety Education Month™ campaigns, and more, including links to other graphics collections.

Have fun! •



## ■ **The Food Safety Educator: Index Now On-line**

Six years of *The Food Safety Educator's* articles are now indexed and available on-line.

A glance at topics covered over the past 6 years provides an interesting look at the ground we've covered as food safety educators. Here's a quick summary:

- 1996: "Safe handling instructions," introduced on packages of meat and poultry;
- 1997: Introducing Fight BAC!™
- 1998: Special issue devoted to consumer research;
- 1999: Fight BAC!™ food safety program for kids;
- 2000: The FSIS campaign to encourage thermometer use—Thermym™;
- 2001: Special issue devoted to social marketing.

Take a look at the index yourself. Go to: [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/educator/index\\_issues.htm#6-1](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/educator/index_issues.htm#6-1) •

## ■ **EdNet Subscribers Quadrupled**

The number of subscribers to EdNet, a monthly electronic newsletter devoted to food safety education, has quadrupled since 1998 to nearly 3,336.

The newsletter is a joint project of the USDA's Food Safety and Inspection Service, the Food and Drug Administration, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

It contains the latest food safety education news including new projects, new regulations, meetings, and conferences.

To subscribe, e-mail: [Listserv@foodsafety.gov](mailto:Listserv@foodsafety.gov)

Send the message: Subscribe EDNET-L firstname last name •

## ■ **Checking Out the Status of Kids**

The well-being of America's children was the topic of a special issue of the *Food Review* published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service in 2001.

In an article titled "Children and Microbial Foodborne Illness," author Jean Buzby reports that estimated costs of five foodborne illnesses in children under the age of 10 totaled \$2.3 billion—about one-third of total costs.

"Children deserve added attention in the study of microbial foodborne illness," Buzby notes, because their risks of some foodborne illnesses are relatively higher than for other groups.

Why? One reason is that their immune systems are not fully developed, making them more vulnerable to some foodborne illnesses. In addition, the child's lower weight means that it takes a smaller quantity of pathogens to make a child sick than a healthy adult.

Foodborne pathogens most likely to cause illness among young children include *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter*.

The leading cause of serious illness and death for young children was *Salmonella*, with infants facing the highest risk of illness of any age group.

The second leading cause of foodborne illness and death was *Listeria monocytogenes*, a pathogen than can infect an unborn child through the mother. While *Listeria* is rarely reported in young children, it can cause spontaneous abortion and developmental complications for newborns.

Other articles in this special issue focus on children's diets, the problem of overweight children, and the economic benefits of food assistance programs.

To access the issue, go to: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/FoodReview/may2001> •

## ■ **Thinking Globally—Working Locally**

Food safety educators and communicators from across the country are making plans to attend *Thinking Globally—Working Locally*, a conference that will help shape future education programs.

The conference is to take place in Orlando, Florida from Sept. 18-20, 2002.

Join us as new, innovative education programs are presented along with the latest epidemiological and consumer behavior research.

The conference is being sponsored by:

**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
• Food Safety and Inspection Service;

• Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service;  
**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

• The Food and Drug Administration;

• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention,  
in cooperation with the **Partnership for Food Safety Education.**

The early registration fee for the 2-1/2 day conference is \$135.

The deadline for abstract proposals is March 2002.

To learn more, check out the Web site. Go to: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Orlando2002> •

# ■ How To Keep in Touch With Food Safety Education Information

## The Food Safety Educator

This free quarterly newsletter reports on new food safety educational programs and materials as well as emerging science concerning food safety risks. It is distributed to nearly 10,000 educators throughout the country, including public health offices, extension educators, industry, and consumer groups.

To subscribe: provide your full name, organization name, & mailing address.

- Write to: USDA/FSIS/Food Safety Education, Room 2944-South Building, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250-3700, or
- Fax your request to: (202) 720-9063, or
- E-mail your request to: [fsis.outreach@usda.gov](mailto:fsis.outreach@usda.gov)
- The newsletter is also available on the FSIS Web site: <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/oa/educator/educator.htm>



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**Please feel free to e-mail comments or suggestions—[fsis.outreach@usda.gov](mailto:fsis.outreach@usda.gov)**

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## On the Web

- USDA/Food Safety and Inspection Service  
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov>
- Thermy™ Web page  
<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/thermy>
- FightBAC!™  
<http://www.fightbac.org>
- Gateway to Government Food Safety Information  
<http://www.foodsafety.gov>
- FDA/Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition  
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov>
- USDA/FDA Foodborne Illness Education Information Center  
<http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodborne>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety>

## Other Resources

**EdNet**—a monthly electronic newsletter for food safety educators. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: [Listserv@foodsafety.gov](mailto:Listserv@foodsafety.gov). Send the message: Subscribe EDNET-L firstname lastname

**foodsafes**—an online electronic discussion group. To join, go to: <http://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodborne>

**Toll-free**—USDA's Meat and Poultry Hotline 1-800-535-4555, for the hearing-impaired (TTY) 1-800-256-7072

Food and Drug Administration's Outreach and Information Center 1-888-SAFEFOOD